

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICAE-00
SSO-00 INRE-00 NSCE-00 DOE-15 SOE-02 DOEE-00 OC-06
CCO-00 PER-01 OPR-02 OES-07 AID-05 PC-01 EB-08
COME-00 AGRE-00 SIL-01 LAB-04 FDRE-00 A-01 SY-05
/118 W

-----102388 041513Z /41

O R 041358Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY ACCRA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2970
INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY LOME
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ACCRA 2598

LONDON FOR SEITZ

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PINS, PGOV, GH
SUBJ: ELECTORAL COMMISSIONER ABBAN SURFACES, ACHEAMPONG
CRACKS DOWN ON OPPOSITION

REF: ACCRA 2572

1. SUMMARY: ELECTORAL COMMISSIONER ABBAN, WHO HAD
BEEN IN HIDING SINCE MARCH 30 REFERENDUM, MET WITH
HEAD OF STATE ACHEAMPONG APRIL 3 AND LATER ATTENDED
MEETING OF GHANA BAR ASSOCIATION. ACHEAMPONG HAS
BANNED OPPOSITION MOVEMENTS AND CALLED ON STUDENTS
AND PROFESSORS TO RETURN TO UNIVERSITIES. FINAL
OFFICIAL FIGURES ALLEGE THAT UNION GOVERNMENT WAS
APPROVED IN REFERENDUM BY A MAJORITY OF MORE THAN
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200,000 VOTES. SOME PROFESSIONALS SAY THEY WILL BE
OUT ON STRIKE AS OF APRIL 5. POTENTIAL FOR CLASHES
BETWEEN GOG AND ITS CRITICS REMAINS HIGH. BUT WE THINK
BOTH SIDES WILL TRY, AT LEAST INITIALLY, TO AVOID RESORT
TO FORCE. END SUMMARY.

2. ON APRIL 4, RADIO GHANA REPORTED THAT ELECTORAL

COMMISSIONER ABBAN, WHO HAD BEEN IN HIDING AS A RESULT OF DISPUTES OVER MARCH 30 REFERENDUM ON UNION GOVERNMENT (REFTEL), CALLED ON HEAD OF STATE ACHEAMPONG MORNING APRIL 3, ACCOMPANIED BY CATHOLIC ARCHBISHOP OF CAPE COAST AND PRESIDENT OF METHODIST CHURCH OF GHANA. ACCORDING TO BROADCAST AND LATER TV AND PRESS COVERAGE, ABBAN DELIVERED A PERSONAL NOTE TO ACHEAMPONG, BUT CONTENTS WERE NOT DIVULGED. CLERICS, WHO HAVE BEEN ACTIVE ON ANTI-UNION GOVERNMENT SIDE OF DEBATE, ALLEGEDLY INVOKED DIVINE BLESSINGS ON WHAT WAS BILLED AS A WARM RECONCILIATION BETWEEN ABBAN AND HEAD OF STATE. ACHEAMPONG REPORTEDLY ASSURED ABBAN THAT NO GRUDGE IS HELD AGAINST HIM AND THAT HE IS FREE TO GO BACK TO THE HIGH COURT BENCH.

3. ABBAN THEN ATTENDED MEETING OF GHANA BAR ASSOCIATION, HELD TO CONSIDER WHAT ACTIONS PROFESSIONALS WOULD TAKE TO PROTEST RESULTS OF REFERENDUM. ACCORDING TO OBSERVERS, ABBAN RECEIVED A HERO'S WELCOME FROM HIS LEGAL COLLEAGUES AND WAS VISIBLY MOVED BY THE WARMTH OF THEIR SUPPORT.

4. ON APRIL 3 ACHEAMPONG ANNOUNCED THAT THREE GROUPS OPPOSED TO UNION GOVERNMENT--PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT FOR FREEDOM AND JUSTICE (PMFJ), THIRD FORCE AND FRONT FOR PREVENTION OF DICTATORSHIP--HAVE ALL BEEN BANNED. ACHEAMPONG SAID THAT THESE BODIES WERE FORMED TO OPPOSE UNION GOVERNMENT; NOW THAT THEY HAVE LOST, THEY

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WILL BE COMMITTING AN OFFENSE IF THEY CONTINUE TO EXIST AND OPERATE. HE ALSO WARNED EDITORS OF PAPERS WHICH HAVE BEEN PUBLISHING ANTI-UNION GOVERNMENT STORIES TO DESIST; IF THEY DO NOT, HE ADDED, GOG "WILL BE FORCED TO TAKE ACTION TO PROTECT GHANAIANS."

5. ACHEAMPONG ALSO ASKED STUDENTS AND UNIVERSITY LECTURERS TO RETURN TO CAMPUS, IMPLYING THAT IF STUDENTS DID NOT GO BACK, THEY WILL LOSE THEIR STIPENDS FROM GOG. HEAD OF STATE SAID "THIS TIME, WE ARE GOING TO BE VERY, VERY FIRM ... DAYS OF LENIENCY ARE PAST; WE HAVE SHOWN TOO MUCH MAGNANIMITY AND THAT IS ENOUGH." FINALLY, ACHEAMPONG WARNED GHANAIANS WHO HAD BEEN IN TOUCH WITH BBC TO DESIST; OTHERWISE, THEY WILL BE COMMITTING SUBVERSION AND "WHEN WE GET THEM, THEY WILL

BE DEALT WITH."

6. FINAL RESULTS OF REFERENDUM, FROM GOG POINT OF VIEW, WERE RELEASED BY ACTING ELECTORAL COMMISSIONER A.M. QUAYE ON APRIL 3. ACCORDING TO THESE FIGURES, 56 PERCENT OF VOTERS (1,103,423) FAVORED UNION GOVERNMENT AND 44 PER-

CENT (880,255) OPPOSED IT. TURNOUT WAS RELATIVELY LIGHT --
43 PERCENT (1,983,678) OF GHANA'S 4.6 REGISTERED VOTERS

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FM AMEMBASSY ACCRA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2971
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ACCRA 2598

LONDON FOR SEITZ

ALLEGEDLY WENT TO POLLS. AS REPORTED REFTEL, PMFJ
SUPPORTERS ARE CLAIMING REFERENDUM WAS RIGGED AND THAT
UNION GOVERNMENT WAS IN FACT DEFEATED. THEY ARE CERTAIN
TO REJECT OFFICIAL RESULTS GIVEN ABOVE. UNION GOVERN-
MENT ADHERENTS CLAIM "YES" VOTE WOULD HAVE BEEN EVEN
HIGHER HAD ABBAN AND PMFJ NOT TRIED TO RIG REFERENDUM
THEMSELVES.

7. SOME LAWYERS ARE ALREADY OUT ON STRIKE. DOCTORS
ARE REPORTEDLY LEAVING HOSPITALS APRIL 4 AND WILL BE
ON STRIKE BEGINNING APRIL 5. WE DO NOT YET KNOW WHAT
ENGINEERS PLAN TO DO. THEIR ACTIONS, IF ANY, WILL BE
CRITICAL SINCE THEY CONTROL FLOW OF ELECTRICITY, WATER
AND PETROLEUM PRODUCTS TO ACCRA AND OTHER CITIES. AT
PRESENT, ACCRA REMAINS QUIET AND NORMAL UTILITY SERVICES
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CONTINUE. HOWEVER, SINCE ACHEAMPONG REGIME NOW SAYS IT WILL DEAL HARSHLY WITH DISSIDENTS, AND PROFESSIONALS AND SUPPORTERS OF PMFJ CLAIM THEY ARE UNWILLING TO ACCEPT WHAT THEY CONSIDER ARE FRADULENT RESULTS OF REFERENDUM, STAGE IS SET FOR CLASHES BETWEEN GOG AND ITS CRITICS. HOWEVER, SEVERAL OTHER FACTORS ARE FORTUNATELY WORKING AGAINST AN IMMEDIATE RESPORT TO FORCE. ABBAN HAS SURFACED AND APPARENTLY REACHED SOME KIND OF ACCOMODATION WITH ACHEAMPONG. HIS REAPPEARANCE MAY HELP CALM HOTHEADS ON BOTH SIDES. SECOND, IT IS QUESTIONABLE WHETHER PROFESSIONALS WILL BE ABLE TO MOUNT AND MAINTAIN EFFECTIVE STRIKES -- AND, EQUALLY IMPORTANTLY, TO CARRY PUBLIC OPINION WITH THEM. FINALLY, GHANAIAANS OF ALL PERSUASIONS SHARE AN AVERSION TO VIOLENCE AND WILL TRY TO AVOID OUTRIGHT CONFLICT WHENEVER POSSIBLE. THUS WHILE POTENTIAL FOR CLASHES REMAINS HIGH, WE ARE CAUTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC THAT STRIKES, IF THEY OCCUR, WILL BE RELATIVELY PEACEFUL AND THAT WIDESPREAD DISTURBANCES MAY BE AVOIDED.

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Message Attributes

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